

The Experience of Low Income Singles in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver

by Jim Green

1986

**Task Force on
Roomers, Boarders
and Lodgers**



Commissioned by the
Honourable Alvin Curling
Minister of Housing

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/SPECIAL COMMISSIONED PAPERS

Prepared by the
Ontario Task Force on
Roomers, Boarders and Lodgers,

September 4th, 1986

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FORWARD

The purpose of this report, "Special Commissioned Papers" is to broaden our understanding of the problems and solutions for housing low income singles and the homeless. The Ontario Task Force on Roomers, Boarders, and Lodgers is conscious of the fact that the epidemic of homelessness is growing far faster than the remedies, the most basic of which is secure, dignified shelter. What form that housing should take, who should provide financing, and where it should be located are but a few of the urgent questions that often generate more controversy than action.

Right from the start, the Task Force was aware that there are very few cities in North America that have made significant progress towards solving a classic problem: how to protect low income single renters; how to preserve what little stock for this group is left after the fact that most cities have lost almost half their low income housing stock through conversions, demolitions, and the impacts of major construction projects; and how to generate new housing supply for this group, in view of the fact that many municipalities have regulatory controls and zoning practices that make it very difficult to build housing for this client group.

We have endeavored to track down those individuals who are known to be leaders and experts in the field and cities where innovative programs have been put in place, and we have searched for writers who have significant pragmatic experience in dealing with the provision of low income housing for singles and the homeless. The focus of the eight reports following is to understand the nature of needs, the political and administrative environment in which solutions have been developed, and most important, the story about what programs have been tried, how they have worked, and what lessons have been learned.

Following are papers from five American and three Canadian experts. Generally speaking, Canadian cities have made less progress in solving these problems than their American counterparts. In the U.S., on the other hand, the loss of stock occurred earlier, and the problem has been before the public eye much longer, so there are more experiences to draw on.

In Los Angeles we were fortunate to have a paper from Andy Raubeson, Executive Director of the Single Room Occupancy Housing Corporation. This agency is unique in North America in preserving SRO hotels and since its creation in 1984 by the City of Los Angeles, has been able to renovate close to 1,000 units through \$9.7 million in investment. Andy worked in Portland, Oregon prior to coming to Los Angeles, and his paper also describes Portland's experiences, as well as

other cities in the U.S. that are beginning to take significant actions.

In San Francisco, Brad Paul, Director of the North of Market Planning Coalition is perhaps the most knowledgeable individual and was active in assisting the City of San Francisco develop the first permanent moratorium legislation available in the country. This law, known as the Residential Hotel Conversion and Demolition Ordinance was first established in 1979 but has gone through many changes through continuous interaction between the City, community groups, and landlords. His paper also highlights many other innovative policies and projects that have been developed in the City over the last several years.

In Seattle, Steve Clagett, Director of Common Ground, a non-profit established by the Church Council of Greater Seattle and the YMCA of Seattle in 1980 to preserve threatened low-income housing in the downtown area. Steve has prepared an extensive overview of the solutions developed in Seattle, including research studies; an innovative housing and preservation ordinance which calls for replacement housing where units are demolished, as well as City renovation grants; private development incentives, such as housing bonuses and transfer of development rights; local tax financing, such as obligation bonds and levies and tax increment financing; federal housing programs; mitigating housing impacts; and development of an advocacy community to continue to lobby for preservation of low income housing in the downtown.

In New York City, Bruce Gould, Executive Director of the Program and Management Analysis Branch of the City's Housing, Preservation and Development Department has prepared a detailed history of the evolution of policies, research, and programs in New York City, with particular emphasis on recent experience under Law 59. In January 1985, New York passed an 18 month moratorium on housing conversions similar to the bill recently passed in Ontario and the New York law was recently extended to 24 months so it will expire the end of 1986. Mr. Gould has worked on and off with the City since 1968, first as a Deputy Commissioner of Code Enforcement and Rent Control between 1968 and 1971, then as a Manager of the City's various loan programs to 1973, and in his current capacity as Executive Director, Program and Management Analysis since 1978.

From Stamford, Connecticut, we were able to receive a paper from Elizabeth Rosenbaum, Director of a firm called Urban Initiatives, which concentrates its management expertise in the areas of neighbourhood preservation, special needs housing, and community development. The title of her paper is "The Integration of Housing and Human Services Systems in the Creation of Special Needs Housing". Her

report discusses indepth the major causes of homelessness, and selects a number of innovative programs in both New York State and Connecticut, such as the Emergency Housing Apartment Program, and the Building Condition Monitoring Program. Her paper provides examples of the critical relationship that exists between the administration of housing and social services programs at all levels of government and the significant advantages of integrating financial resources from both housing programs as well as social services programs in order to produce housing for special populations, most notably, homeless adults.

Turning to the Canadian experience, we were able to obtain special commissioned papers from Vancouver, Edmonton, and Winnipeg. In Vancouver, Jim Green, Organizer for the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association produced a detailed account of the problems faced by low income singles in the eastside of Vancouver, where close to 700 persons have been evicted out of their rooms due to Expo 86. The Vancouver situation is particularly relevant to Ontario, because roomers, boarders and lodgers in British Columbia also have no protection under the Landlord and Tenant Act. In addition to describing the legislative and political environment for roomers in Vancouver and efforts to help this group, Jim has also summarized some of the more innovative housing program solutions that are underway through CMHC programs in B.C.

In Edmonton, Lynn Hannley, Director of Communitas Incorporated, a firm that helps non-profit and co-op groups put projects together, prepared a paper that describes three innovative projects that have produced innovative housing solutions for low income singles in Edmonton: the Operation Friendship Rooming House; the Inner City Housing Society project; and the Kuanna Housing Co-operative Ltd. project. The first project provides a comprehensive service system where residents participate in the design and development of the project. The other two projects provide more traditional housing delivery systems through the non-profit and co-operative mechanism.

Finally, in Winnipeg, Lynda Newman, a senior planner with the Manitoba Department of Urban Affairs (formerly with the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg), and Kathy Mancer, a consultant with DSI Development Corporation (and formerly a manager with CMHC) prepared a paper on the Winnipeg experience, which describes the legislative situation in Manitoba, supply and demand issues, issues relative to zoning and community opposition, and the local response to the construction of additional facilities, particularly for ex psychiatric patients.

If you have any comments or wish further information or clarification, contact the writer directly or contact Dale Bairstow, Chairman, Ontario Task Force on Roomers, Boarders and Lodgers, 229 Bain Ave., Toronto, Ontario M4K 1E9.

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

**THE EXPERIENCE OF LOW INCOME SINGLES
IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE OF VANCOUVER**

Prepared for
The Ontario Task Force on
Roomers, Boarders and Lodgers

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I THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

The Downtown Eastside is an urban residential community located in the Central Business District of Vancouver, British Columbia. It is Vancouver's oldest community and was the townsite where the city was rebuilt after the great fire of 1886. The first City Hall was built in the area and was the centre of trade, transportation and commerce until the 1930's when these centres moved west and City Hall was transplanted to the south.

In the 30's it was the home of many depression era organizations such as the Single Mens' Unemployed Association. It was in the Downtown Eastside that the unemployed staged their massive rallies and occupations on important federal and municipal buildings. The Downtown Eastside was also the location of the start of the historic On-To-Ottawa Trek in which thousands of unemployed boarded freight trains and headed for Ottawa to demand jobs, relief and housing. They were met in Regina by Royal Canadian Mounted Police who routed them with machine guns and mounted charges. Today many of the veterans of the depression struggles remain residents of the area.

The Downtown Eastside sits in the thinnest part of the Vancouver peninsula. It is bordered on the west by the affluent financial district known as the Golden Triangle. Office towers and luxury hotels flow over into the Downtown Eastside and low income residential accommodations are lost as the towers' spores give rise to massive offsprings. To the north is the Port of Vancouver which is undergoing development. The port is at present developing plans for massive office and housing complexes on the Waterfront. Developers in the Downtown Eastside are beginning to convert low income

housing to luxury and middle income hotels in anticipation of the Port's development.

To the south is the Provincial Crown Corporation, B.C. Place. The B.C. Place site was an industrial area. Industry has been relocated and today the site is the home of Expo '86. When the World's Fair ends on October 13, 1986, the site will be transformed into what the Province calls, "North America's largest urban renewal programme." It is the combined pressures from Expo/B.C. Place that is and will be the most serious problem to the residents of the Downtown Eastside.

The community edge to the east is the working class residential community known as Grandview-Woodland. It is a community consisting mainly of single family dwellings and a few rooming houses and hotels.

In recent years, Grandview-Woodland has become home to many housing co-ops, market apartments and townhouses. No development pressures emanate from Grandview-Woodland that threaten the Downtown Eastside. In fact, many residents of the Downtown Eastside who are displaced as a result of pressures from the other edges migrated to the Grandview-Woodland area.

II RESIDENTIAL AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

There are ten thousand residents of the Downtown Eastside. The typical resident is a male (only 10% of residents are females) over 55. He lives alone in a 10 x 10 room, with no services, which rents for \$220.00 per month. He is covered by no landlord/tenant legislation and has a monthly income of \$400.00 per month.

The typical resident has lived in a 42 unit hotel for five years but has lived in the Downtown Eastside for the past fifteen years. This length of residency makes the Downtown Eastside Vancouver's most stable residential

community. the typical resident is a veteran of B.C. primary resource industries and suffers from one or more disabilities which are often related to his work in mining, fishing, or logging. Typically, he has been unemployed for many years and is on a form of government assistance. 1

The ten thousand residents of the Downtown Eastside live in two major types of housing. There are many "residential hotels" in the area. They generally contain over 100 single rooms. There usually is a sink in the room while all other facilities are "down the hall". Typically, cooking is not allowed and there is no common kitchen. There is generally a small lobby at grade or on the second floor. There is a large pub or beer parlour on the ground floor. Hotels are usually between seven to ten floors and equipped with elevators.

Rooming houses are the other main source of housing. The rooms are identical to hotel rooms but generally have hot plates for cooking or a common kitchen. Generally at grade there are retail outlets but no pubs. rooming houses are typically two to five stories and are not serviced by elevators. Lobbies usually do not exist.

III PROTECTION FOR ROOMERS AND LODGERS

Tenants in British Columbia are covered by the Residential Tenancy Act. The "R.T.A." governs relationships between landlord and tenants and lays out rights and obligations of both parties. Evictions and rent increases are regulated by the R.T.A. and arbitration services are offered to mediate disputes between the parties.

In British Columbia residents of hotels and rooming houses (usually referred to collectively as "lodging houses") are not classified as "tenants".

They are "licensees" and therefore fall outside the parameters of the R.T.A.

As housing is a provincial jurisdiction, municipalities, such as the City of Vancouver, may not intervene in landlord/resident relationships. The only legislation that does cover this relationship is the "Innkeepers' Act". The Act treats long term residents of lodging houses exactly as an overnight guest in a luxury hotel like the Vancouver Hotel. It is silent on residents' rights and is silent on rent increases, rates, and evictions. All such matters are left to the discretion of the landlord.

The residents of the Downtown Eastside with no legislative protection are left to the whim and mercy of the landlord. In a very few cases landlords and residents have an amicable relationship. I know one landlady who truly is like a mother to her 25 roomers but this is truly an anomaly. In the majority of cases the landlord takes full advantage of his legislated powers. General practices that most residents experience are:- a resident pays his or her rent by the "month" only to find out that in a long month he or she must pay extra for the 31st day. On a long month the rates are shifted from "monthly" to "weekly". On short months (February) the rate remains "monthly".

As the landlord has total right to determine who may enter the lodging house, a host of practices have developed. They include:

- allowing no visitors
- charging the resident for visitors (the going rate currently is \$5.30)
- excluding community workers, relatives and political canvassers from visiting the resident, at the landlords' discretion.
- excluding members of the media from visiting the resident or examining the housing conditions.
- rent may be raised by any amount at any time and at any interval. We

have recently witnessed hundreds of rent increases given with one weeks notice ranging from 300 to 600%.

-No legislation governs evictions. No notice is required, no cause is required, no reasons given. There is no mediation mechanism. There is no appeal. When a lodging house resident contests his or her eviction the police are called in and they "stand by" while the resident and belongings are moved onto the street. The Vancouver Police's position of non-intervention always leads to the resident being evicted. The police are in fact correct in that they are there to quell violence and uphold the "letter of the law". 2

The lack of security of tenure and the unfettered power of the landlord that the individual Downtown Eastside resident faces on a daily basis is not, however, the greatest threat to the population of the Downtown Eastside. The lack of protection for residents, the announcement of the B.C. Place development and the news that Expo '86 would occupy the B.C. Place site set the scene for major redevelopment in the Downtown Eastside. In early 1980, the first phase of this redevelopment took place on the western edge of the community. One new office tower alone replaced three residential hotels that had been the homes of some 200 residents. On the southern edge two lodging houses with over 100 residents - the Aristocratic and the Georgia rooms were razed to make way for a parking structure topped with luxury suites. The residents of the Aristocratic were given 24 hours notice to vacate. At the Georgia rooms the residents were given a week to find other accommodations. One resident who had occupied his room for 47 years was relocated on his 87th birthday.

At the same moment lodging houses that were not prepared to upgrade to the City of Vancouver's fire, liveability and safety by-laws boarded up their

doors. The majority of these were put on the market and have now been leveled and rebuilt as retail, commercial and luxury accommodations. The "demolition stage" came to an end in mid-1985. The City of Vancouver has no complete figures on the loss of housing stock during this period but the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association estimates that approximately 1500 low cost housing units were lost during this period.

The second stage entered abruptly but not unexpectedly. The "conversion stage" began in the summer of 1985 and ended in April 1986. Residents were evicted from their rooms in groups of 40's and 50's. In some cases drawings were presented to City Planning authorities that detailed new "apartment hotels" to replace existing residential hotels. Other owners moved residents from room to room as they remodeled for the expected tourist boom. When renovations were completed on empty rooms the residents were evicted in order to remodel the rest of the hotel.

From mid-December 1985 to the end of February 1986 seven hotels alone evicted approximately 350 long term residents. It is interesting to note that many of these hotels did not apply for permits or through their renovations violated fire and safety codes. One hotel was allowed to rent out only one half of its rooms to tourists for the period of May to July 1986 because of fire violations. As of this writing it is still not completely up to code. A neighbouring hotel has been allowed to rent to tourists but must have a fire marshall posted in the hotel 24 hours a day.

The Downtown Eastside Residents' Association (Dera) has approximately 4500 members in the Downtown Eastside. Dera had predicted both stages would occur and had worked for 6 years to ameliorate the loss of housing and the destruction of the community. Other World Fairs had caused mass evictions and

relocations. With the Downtown Eastside bordering the Expo site and no protection for residents it was clear history was about to repeat itself. 3

Dera tried several techniques in an attempt to ameliorate the negative effects of the World's Fair on residents in the Downtown Eastside. Since 1973 the Association had lobbied for changes to the R.T.A. that would give protection to long term residents of lodging houses. This campaign included thousands of signatures, thousands of letters sent to the Provincial government and invitations for Provincial Cabinet Members to tour the area. In 1982, residents began to picket the offices of the Rentalsman and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Meetings were held with the Rentalsman and it appeared as if legislation might be forthcoming. However, in 1983 on the heels of a provincial election the Social Credit government eliminated the Office of the Rentalsman and altered the Residential and Tenancy Act to specifically exclude lodging house dwellers from its jurisdiction. A meeting was held with Jim Hewitt (the Minister responsible for the R.T.A.) and Dera's Organizer. Mr. Hewitt stated, "As far as I'm concerned tenants in this province have one right - they can move."

IV OTHER PROPOSALS

Although Dera continued to lobby for inclusion under the Residential Tenancy Act, its major tact changed. The new maneuver was two pronged. The plan included legislation to stop displacement of long-term residents and new housing to replace units being lost.

With Expo'86 fast approaching and with the Provincial government adamant that there would be no changes to the Residential Tenancy Act, Dera tried a new approach. With a crisis looming, residents were in desperate need of

legislative protection if they were to retain their homes. Dera decided to seek temporary legislation through a proposed City of Vancouver By-law. Dera's proposed by-law would kick in shortly before the opening of EXPO on May 2, 1986 and would cease to exist on October 13, 1986 - the last day of the World's Fair. The "Expo Housing Protection By-law" was aimed to protect only long term low income residents of the area. Dera believed that the temporary nature of the by-law and the fact that it only covered long term residents (therefore leaving all other lodging house units open to conversion for tourism) would lessen resistance from the Provincial government and hotel owners. It was still essential that the Provincial government would not oppose the proposal because the Municipal By-law had to have provincial approval before it could be enacted by the City of Vancouver. The "Expo Housing Protection By-law" contained these main features:

- 1) It would include only the Downtown Eastside area of the City of Vancouver.
- 2) "Residential Premises" means any premises used for residential purposes where the monthly rent, or the rent calculated on the basis of 30 days did not, as of the first day of September 1985, exceed \$400.00. "Tenant" means a person who has been in continuous occupancy of the residential premises for a period exceeding one year."
- 3) "No increase in rent, or notice to a tenant increasing the rent, for an amount exceeding 5% of the rent payable for the month of September, 1985, for residential premises located within the area herein described shall be valid and enforceable if made or given between the coming into force of this section and the 13th day of October, 1986."
- 4) During the life of the By-law tenants could only be evicted "for cause" as set out in sections 26 and 27 of the Residential Tenancy Act. 4

Although the By-law was of a temporary nature and was restrictive in its scope it was evident that both the Provincial government and the B.C. Hotels Association would still have objections. Both were on record as opposing controls of any type and believed the "market" would determine the nature of housing in the Downtown Eastside. 5 There was also opposition on Vancouver city Council from developer oriented Aldermen but with the Mayor and the COPE majority on Council Dera had a one vote advantage. However, when the "Expo Housing Protection By-law" went before Council in November of 1985 the Mayor was out of town. The By-law received a tie vote and was therefore not passed. It did not come before Council again until February of 1986 where the required majority was obtained.

In the meantime Dera worked to publicize the impending evictions and the need for Provincial approval of the By-law. Dera sponsored a series of public meetings, debates and "politician's" tours to win support from elected officials and to bring public attention to the issue.

On July 20, 1984 Dera sponsored a "Politician's Tour" of the Downtown Eastside. A slide show was presented that showed the loss of housing stock due to demolition and conversion. The same 40 "politicians" were given a walking tour to meet residents and view hotels that Dera identified as ready to evict their long-term residents. Included in the tours were: Jimmy Pattison, Chairman, Expo '86; Liberal Party President Iona Campagnolo, several Liberal Senators, Margaret Mitchell, MP Vancouver East; several Vancouver Aldermen, and Bob Skelly, leader of the Provincial Opposition. All Provincial Cabinet Members were invited - none were in attendance and most never answered Dera's invitation.

At different times others were invited on Dera tours. They all endorsed

Dera's proposed By-law and returned to parliament or the Provincial Legislature to demand action to stop the evictions. Dan Heap, MP for Spadina and Federal NDP Housing Critic visited the area on two occasions. NDP Provincial Housing Critic, Robin Blencoe also raised his concerns in the legislature and called for endorsement of the Expo Housing Protection By-law. Emery Barnes, NDP MLA for Vancouver Centre (in the Downtown Eastside) lived on "welfare" income in a Downtown Eastside hotel for 2 months. He returned to the legislature where he was involved in a rancorous debate with Social Credit MLA's and was thrown out of the legislature for his attempts to get passage of the By-law.

Dera also invited the three leaders of the Federal Political parties to examine the situations. Liberal Leader John Turner toured the area with the Dera Organizer. He returned to Ottawa and urged the House of Commons to pressure the province of British Columbia to enact the necessary legislation. The House did not act. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney did not respond to Dera's invitation.

In February of 1986, as hotels were evicting hundreds of long term residents, Dera held a public forum in the Downtown Eastside. On the panel were Mike Harcourt, mayor of Vancouver; Jimmy Pattison, Chairman of Expo '86 and the Dera Organizer. Over 400 people were present. Many were evictees, in wheel chairs or on walkers or crutches. The evictees who spoke demanded protection from further dislocation. Mayor Harcourt and the Dera Organizer asked Mr. Pattison to accompany them to Victoria to urge passage of the necessary legislation. Mr. Pattison said he must discuss it with the Expo Board.

A few days later a meeting was held with Bill Ritchie, Minister of

Municipal Affairs, Mr. Pattison, Mayor Harcourt and the Dera Organizer. Pattison and Ritchie had met an hour earlier, behind closed doors, with the hotel operators who had or were evicting their residents. Mr. Ritchie announced there was "no problem" but he was going to set up a task force to investigate "abuses to Social Housing". the attempt to obtain protection for long term lodging house residents had failed.

V RECENT INNOVATIONS IN DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE HOUSING

While Dera was attempting to gain legislative protection for lodging house occupants it also worked on a more permanent solution. Expo '86 called for tenders to house international participants in newly constructed units for the duration of the fair. Dera, in conjunction with the Chinese Benevolent Association and the First United Church Housing Society, answered the call with a proposal to build 457 units for the exhibitors.

The plan was simple and had the endorsation of Mayor Harcourt and the majority of City Council. The three non-profit groups would use C.M.H.C. programmes to build the housing in the Downtown Eastside. It would be leased to Expo which in turn could lease the units to international exhibitors, who would be charged the "going market rate". Profits generated by the non-profit housing would be put into a subsidy pool. At the end of the fair 100% of the units would be rented to Downtown Eastsiders at welfare rate. This plan would cost Expo nothing and at the same time leave a "positive Expo legacy". The Expo Board said the plan was "too expensive". Dera asked if the Board was willing to sit down and rework the numbers. The Board responded, "There will be no further discussion."

The Expo housing was built on the University Endowment Lands and was

reported to be losing \$200,000.00 per month after construction was completed.⁷

All attempts by Dera to stop evictions and to ameliorate some of their negative effects by providing social housing failed. The political will and strength of the Provincial government could not be broken. The result is a community with deep emotional scars. Many residents have been displaced from the community. A few found better housing but still faced the stress of the upheaval. Most evictees moved into poorer conditions where they still must live with no legislative protection. Many residents, again as a result of not legislative protection, were caught on the eviction merry-go-round and were evicted two or three times. Two evictees committed suicide within a few days of eviction notifications. Four others died within 2 weeks of eviction and the Vancouver Medical Health Officer ruled that in one case the death was a "direct result of being evicted."⁸

Studies of dislocation of the elderly indicate that elderly evictees will become ill and die at a faster pace than if they were allowed to stay in their homes. Factors that to some degree ameliorate negative consequences of relocations are advanced notice of relocation, moving to a similar environment, and continuation of social networks.⁹

The individual and social cost of relocation can be minimized if there is legislation that protects residents from eviction without cause, and without notice. Lodging house residents must have all rights and obligations of a "tenant". It may be seen as necessary to obtain tenancy status by establishing residential permanence in a lodging house for perhaps one month. This, however, is not required of other tenants and permanency should be established by simply paying a months rent. The negative impacts of dislocation on the aged and the disabled who dwell in lodging houses really

demand that lodging house residents have protection over and above that required by more mobile and younger tenants. Notice of dislocation should be based on length of residency. For example - 3 months notice up to one year of residing and one month per year for each additional year of occupancy. To landlords this proposal may seem severe but the consequences of evictions far outweigh the concerns of landlords.

Even if lodging house residents are able to acquire tenancy status they will still be subject to forced relocation through development pressures and profit motives. It is also not impossible that once tenancy status is awarded it could be removed by a new government or a change in philosophy in the existing one. It is a cruel hard fact that as long as our elders must dwell within lodging houses governed by market conditions they face dislocation. We may temper it through legislation but it is always lurking over the horizon. While we must do everything in our power to protect, through legislation, the homes of lodging house residents we must work even harder to remove them from an uncertain and unpredictable future. Hand in glove with legislative protection there must be a massive social housing construction programme aimed specifically at lodging house occupants. Without this latter component we are in the protective eye of the storm awaiting the next wave of dislocations.

It is difficult to determine how much housing stock has been lost in the Downtown Eastside over the past several years. It is, however, possible to make a reasonable estimate. The City of Vancouver's Social Planning Department reports that between "November 1978 and December 1982 there appears to have been a total loss of 76 lodging houses containing 1,987 units" 10 Dera's estimate of 1500 units lost between 1980 and 1985 overlaps two years of Social Planning's survey. It would be safely within the bounds of logic to

assume a loss of 1,000 units from 1983 to 1985. That would give us an overall loss of approximately 3,000 units. This number does not include the 600 individuals who were evicted during the conversion period. These housing units are still extant and some may be offered to low income residents at the end of the World Fair. We will have to wait and see.

As bleak as the housing picture is for residents of the Downtown Eastside, there are some bright spots. Social Planning estimates that as of 1983 there were 800 Social Housing units in the community. These units are primarily government developed and operated "public non-profit" housing.

Since 1983 there has been developed by "private non-profit" groups some 800 units in the area. (about 300 units of these are still under construction) The community has been moderately successful in replacing lost market units with Social Housing units. These latter units have been developed and constructed with the assistance of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the mandate of section 56.1 of the National Housing Act. This programme requires, both economically and philosophically, a mixed income residency. It requires that a minimum of 15% of residents must be "low income" or "income tested". The First United Church Housing Society and Dera Housing Society have successfully used this programme to build housing with 87.5% of residents below the poverty line. Although there remains an income mix it is heavily tilted to favour those in the lowest economic strata.

Both groups have mixed families and elderly singles, disabled and able bodies. The two housing societies have also mixed Cantonese speaking and English speaking residents in the same projects at a ratio of 40 to 60% respectively, which reflects very closely the ethnic make-up of the community. This approach has led to a de-ghettoization of the community and a greater

understanding between the various segments. The Dera and First United Church approach to housing is very similar but there is a significant difference.

The First Church builds "non-profit rentals". A non-resident board oversees and operates First Church's housing. The residents are "tenants" and protected under the Residential Tenancy Act and by a tenancy agreement with the Church. There is an in-house manager and caretaker. There is also a "tenants' committee" that brings tenants grievances and operational suggestions to the Board. This system seems to work very well and the tenants do have a real input into their housing.

Dera uses a co-op model. It was originally argued by some CMHC official that "poor people could not operate a co-op". "The two different ethnic groups cannot co-exist in a co-op atmosphere." "You cannot successfully integrate families and elderly singles in a co-op." "Families do not want to live in the Downtown core." (This last myth was destroyed when the Dera Housing Society did a survey of some 500 family applicants and 95% answered that their first choice was the Downtown Eastside.)

The prejudices against low income peoples' ability to operate a co-op in the Downtown Eastside was completely overridden by the experience of the Dera Co-op. The Dera Co-op has been occupied for 18 months. It has no outside board and operates independently of the Dera Housing Society. There is no management, caretaker or paid employee. Although the average age is 59 all functions from janitorial to financial management are performed by co-op residents.

The Dera Co-op has been called "a model of resident participation" and from this participation comes the development of a "new person". 11 The

pride of self management has led co-op members to a greater understanding of their own abilities. This understanding on the part of the "new person" leads to a belief that these skills can be transferred to outside of the co-op to the community at large. Co-op housing in this sense cannot be separated from the community. The community created the co-op and the co-op creates a self assured person who steps back into the community to offer new skills and talents. The co-op becomes the architect of the community.

VI CONCLUSION

For thirteen years Downtown Eastside Residents' Association has lobbied the Provincial Government to include lodgers under the Residential Tenancies Act. The effort has produced no tangible results. It would appear that tenancy status will only be obtained through a change in government. Therefore the only security for residents of the downtown eastside is social housing.

Recently the Federal Government has turned social housing over to the province. In British Columbia the social credit government has adamantly opposed non-profit housing yet it is now entrusted with the delivery of social housing. But the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association has been prequalified for 100 units of housing under the Provincial Housing Program. If there is no political intervention and Downtown Eastside Residents' Association is allowed to build these units it may be signal of a change in philosophy in Victoria.

If not it will certainly mean that social housing for downtown eastside residents will also have to wait for a change in government. In either event there is still a pressing and desperate need for at least 2,000 social housing units for the people of the downtown eastside. The politics of housing still must be played out in our community.

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